



@USNPEOPLE WEEKLY WIRE

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1.) Navy Secretary to Marines: Women in Combat Is Irreversible / 12 APRIL 16 [\[LINK\]](#)

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CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. (AP) - Navy Secretary Ray Mabus had a simple message Tuesday for 1,500 Marines and sailors: The decision to let women compete for all military combat positions is as irreversible as earlier edicts to integrate blacks and allow gays and lesbians to openly serve.

It was Mabus' third visit to a major Marine Corps base to explain the issue to rank-and-file audiences since Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in December that all combat positions would be open to women.

Mabus repeatedly emphasized that standards won't be lowered.

"Marines, we're past the decision now. The secretary of defense has made the decision. Now we're into implementing," he said Tuesday at Camp Pendleton in California.

Marine Corps leaders had sought to keep certain infantry and combat jobs closed to women, citing studies showing combined-gender units are not as effective as male-only units. Carter, backed by Mabus, overruled them.

Since December, the military services have put together plans outlining how they will integrate women into male-only units.

Marines who sat cross-legged around Mabus on a large concrete surface used for ceremonies didn't object to the change when the secretary invited questions. Some who volunteered to speak with reporters said any resistance might come from older Marines.

"This generation, so much has been changing, whether it be with gays and lesbians and all that, everything's just changing," said Lance Cpl. Guillermo Arenas, 20, who joined the Marines in July. "We have a lot of older Marines that were in longer, so it might take them a little while to adapt to it, but then eventually they'll know that they're Marines."

Four of the seven questions that Mabus took were about women in combat. Others were more interested in his thoughts on Iraq and the future size of the Marine Corps.

One questioner asked for his thoughts on drafting women. He said he supports the idea but it's a decision for Congress. Another wanted to know how quickly women would be fully integrated into combat jobs.

"I think it won't happen all in one day," Mabus said. "It'll be relatively gradual but the decision's been made."

Gunnery Sgt. Janet Marrufo, 31, said Mabus' simple message was effective.

"It was important for Marines to hear out in the open, and let them know officially that it's a full change and that this is happening," said Marrufo, who has been a Marine for 12 years. "I think some Marines were unclear about that at first but he cleared the air."

Mabus, a former Democratic governor of Mississippi, has carried the same message to large audiences at Marine bases at Parris Island, South Carolina, and Quantico, Virginia, after Marine Corps leaders expressed reservations about the change.

Gen. Robert Neller, the Marine Corps commandant, told senators in February that he worried about retention, injury rates and unit effectiveness.

"We have a decision and we're in the process of moving out," Neller told senators. "We will see where the chips fall. And, again, our hope is that everyone will be successful. But hope is not a course of action on the battlefield."

Neller told senators that Marine Corps testing revealed two significant differences between all-male units and those with men and women. He said all-male units were able to better march long distances carrying heavy loads and also were able to fire their weapons more accurately after marching over distance.

Being big and strong and having a "certain body mass give you an advantage," said Neller.

Mabus told the Marines Tuesday that fully integrating women was akin to the integration of blacks in the 1940s and the repeal of the 'don't-ask-don't-tell' policy against gays and lesbians openly serving.

"We are stronger because we have Marines of color," he said. "Same thing when 'don't-ask-don't-tell' got repealed. We're stronger because we don't judge people by who they love but on whether they can do the job as Marines. A more diverse force is a stronger force."

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The senior official who led the Pentagon's Force of the Future effort said the largest problem he faced wasn't resistance to change from the top uniformed leadership in the department, but how to define "what talent means" in recruiting and retaining people.

Speaking Monday at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C., think-tank, to explain why he put tight deadlines on studies and recommendations, Brad Carson quoted Gen. Edwin "Shy" Meyer, former Army chief of staff: "You have to overwhelm the bureaucracy" and then let it assimilate the reforms.

Using the expected changes coming in the Defense Officers Personnel Management Act over the next two-to-five years as an example of fostering change, he added, "A year ago that wasn't even on the table." While the combat arms probably would retain an "up-or-out" policy, it is a template that might not work efficiently in signal, cyber or space.

Cyber "is an obvious example where reform is needed" in recruiting, promoting and retaining in both the military and civilian side of the department. "In some ways, [the challenge] is greater with the civilians" not only over higher salaries offered in the private sector but because applicants being made to "wait 10 months as a barista for a clearance."

Carson predicted more opportunities for lateral entry into cyber or other high demand fields such piloting unmanned aerial vehicles and cargo planes. He also expects greater integration of the active and reserve components in the future.

Realizing that one size does not fit all is "what we're after." He said that is an important difference that the private sector has seized upon.

At a February Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Carson was pressed often on not keeping members informed on the costs of changes and whether a civilian model and personnel practices were fitted for the military.

Carson, who served in a number of “acting” positions in the Army secretariat and the Defense Department as personnel chief, said, “I think the ideas stand” on issues such as extended child-care hours and freezing eggs for later childbearing, flexibility in assignments including opening the combat arms as ways to make military service more attractive to women and better equity in instituting a 401(k) retirement program for all members. “We will see more [change] to come” such as in changing policies and regulations covering transgender recruits and members.

“There was never a situation where someone said ‘over my dead body’,” he said

“[Secretary of Defense Ash] Carter has been a terrific supporter” of the changes and in supporting efforts inside the department and with Congress, he said, to make the military “a better fighting force that “is still consistent with operational needs.”

Carson said he viewed his role in the department as “a policy entrepreneur” and salesman taking the work of the past 30 years by think-tanks, war colleges and outside experts in reforming the personnel system in stages that could be taken immediately and examining longer-range changes that required congressional or administrative actions outside the Defense Department.

In dealing with experts outside the Pentagon, he said “we need to do this, give us your feedback . . . be a fellow traveler” to make those changes.

Carson, a former congressman and Iraq war veteran, said he is leaving the post after about a year because the “Vacancies Act was working its strange wizardry on me”—in which his title changed from “acting under secretary” eventually to “senior adviser” over time because his confirmation was not acted upon by the Senate.

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Recruit Reboot is a completely anonymous game on the Massive Multiplayer Online War Game Leveraging the Internet (MMOWGLI) platform, generated by the Navy Post-Graduate School and NSTC to use feedback commentary to help solve challenges.

Players provide feedback by playing "idea cards" on six areas of training including militarization, damage control, seamanship, personal financial development, policy, and watchstanding. Players earn points with each card they play as well as by commenting on another player's card. The more points they earn, the more players help provide the most effective training for their future shipmates.

The player with the most points wins the game and will earn a Flag Letter of Commendation, awarded by Rear Adm. Stephen C. Evans, commander, Naval Service Training Command, for their positive impact on Naval Accessions Training. Although player points are displayed, their feedback will remain anonymous.

Ask your Chief for the Recruit Reboot flyer or visit <http://mmowgli.nps.edu/recruitreboot/> to sign up and play.

For more information about NSTC, visit <http://www.netc.navy.mil/nstc/> or <http://www.facebook.com/NavalServiceTraining/>.

For more news from Naval Service Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/greatlakes/.

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"The purpose of the pilot is to ... determine if the elimination of the requirement to obtain a referral or preauthorization for urgent care visits improves access to urgent care, helps enrollees to choose the most appropriate source for the health care they need ... potentially lowers health care costs for the Department of Defense (DoD) and/or improves patient satisfaction," the policy document states.

Currently Tricare Prime users must receive prior authorization to visit an urgent care. Emergency room visits, however, are free. Because of that military families often default to emergency room use when they cannot get an appointment with their primary care provider, military family watchdogs say. The urgent care pilot program, they say, is aimed at fixing that.

Most Tricare users will be a part of the pilot, the document states. Active-duty service members and activated Guard and Reserve members enrolled in Tricare Prime Remote and all other beneficiaries enrolled in Tricare Prime, Tricare Prime Remote or Tricare Young Adult, including retirees, will be allowed two non-authorized visits per year. Tricare Overseas Program users seeking care in the U.S. will be permitted unlimited urgent care visits without authorization, the policy state.

Not included in the pilot, however, are enrollees in Tricare Standard, Tricare Reserve Select or Tricare Retired Reserve. Those users currently do not need urgent care authorization and receive care there at no cost provided their yearly \$300 deductible and up to \$3,000 catastrophic cap has been met. Tricare Overseas Program users who are not in the U.S. also do not qualify for the program. Tricare for Life users are also not included in the pilot program.

To avoid using one of their no-authorization urgent care visits, Tricare officials say included users should get a referral from their primary care provider or the Tricare nurse advice line at 1-800-874-2273.

Tricare is required by law to update Congress annually on the pilot program's results, including on whether or not it is helping the system save money on emergency room visits by allowing beneficiaries easy access to urgent care.

Officials with the National Military Family Association said they are pleased with the pilot roll-out but wish it included more allowed non-referral visits.

"We don't oppose a cap, but we believe a cap should've been higher," said Karen Ruedisueli, deputy director of government relations for NMFA. There are many legitimate reasons why people might have to have more than two urgent care visits. If they had had a higher cap, let's say six or eight a year, it would've really allowed them to see how much suppressed demand is out there."

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